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Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 14 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 64

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53 and Corr.1)

The Acting President: The addendum to the report of the Human Rights Council, covering the Council's twenty-first session, held from 10 to 28 September 2012, is currently available, in English only, on the Council's website. It will be circulated as document A/67/53/Add.1 in all languages as soon as the translations are completed.

In connection with this item, I would like to recall that the General Assembly, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September, decided to consider agenda item 64 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281 of 17 June 2011.

In accordance with resolution 65/281, I now give the floor to Her Excellency Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council.

Ms. Lasserre (Uruguay), President of the Human Rights Council (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to come before the Assembly today for the second time to present the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53). I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and wish them success in fulfilling their mandate.

The year 2012 marks the sixth since the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the first year since the review of its working methods. Since then, the Council has dealt with human rights situations in various parts of the world, aiming at addressing the root causes of human rights violations and raising awareness of them in the context of the different crises. This has been done through successful building on interregional coalitions and thanks to the strong desire of all members to deal with human rights challenges, deteriorating situations and emergencies in a non-confrontational, consistent and coherent manner.

An example of that approach may be found in the consideration of the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has dominated much of the Council's attention this year. We have held two special sessions and one emergency debate and have adopted resolutions on this in every regular session of 2012, following interactive dialogues with the commission of inquiry. In its most recent resolution on Syria, 21/26, adopted in September at the twenty-first session, the Council decided to extend the mandate of the commission of inquiry on Syria and to strengthen its capacity. I have therefore appointed two additional members to the commission, and I hope that those additional appointments will be supported by strengthened support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the commission of inquiry, including through the deployment of more staff on the ground.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The Council also adopted resolutions on Eritrea, Belarus, Myanmar, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mali, as well as on Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Cambodia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Guinea, Somalia and Yemen. With the decision to appoint a new Rapporteur for Eritrea, the Council decided to transfer the communications that were being considered under the confidential complaint procedure. I wish to point out that the working methods of the complaint procedure have recently been improved, thanks to close cooperation between the working groups on communications and on situations.

The Council also discussed the long-standing human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories by, for example, establishing an international fact-finding mission to investigate the impact of the Israeli settlements on the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Council will consider the mission's report at its next session, in March.

I would like to emphasize that the full implementation of those and other important resolutions depends greatly on the availability of additional resources, which will, I hope, be approved by the Assembly.

During its past three regular sessions, the Council held, among other debates, a total of 16 panel discussions on subjects such as freedom of expression on the Internet; sexual orientation and gender identity; reprisals; people with HIV/AIDS or living with those with HIV/AIDS; minority rights; children's rights and the administration of justice; sport and the Olympic ideal; the promotion and protection of human rights in a multicultural context, including by combating xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance; legal remedies and reparations for women victims of violence; female human rights defenders; indigenous peoples' access to justice; and technical cooperation in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). All those panels, having benefited from the experience and perspective of a wide range of relevant actors — including States, academics, civil society, United Nations institutions, international and regional organizations and communications media — favoured substantive and constructive discussions on subjects that at times might seem challenging or difficult to tackle.

In addition, the first high-level panel on mainstreaming a human rights perspective, held in February, in which senior officials of United Nations agencies participated, focused on the area of human rights, development and cooperation. We hope that holding this panel annually will contribute to improving awareness, coordination, synergies and technical cooperation among the various relevant stakeholders, so as to address human rights challenges and have a positive impact on development efforts.

The high-level panel on mainstreaming human rights within the United Nations system, to be held during the Council's February session, is likely to focus on human rights and the post-2015 development agenda, with special attention to education. The panel could also be a good opportunity to promote improvements on the basis of the assessment of progress, achievements and challenges in mainstreaming human rights in the United Nations system with regard to the current Millennium Development Goals. It could also provide a timely input for the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General, and for the relevant special General Assembly event planned for next year. Issues relating to the right to development will therefore continue to have a prominent place in the Council's work.

With regard to special procedures, the Council has established new mandates, including two country mandates, namely, Special Rapporteurs on Belarus and Eritrea, and a thematic mandate, namely, the independent expert on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. That brings the total number of mandates to 48.

In 2012, the Council heard for the first time the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

The high number of panels, together with the interactive dialogues and general debates, provide a forum for fruitful and focused discussion on various human rights challenges. However, we should avoid overloading the Council's programme of work. In 2012, the Council adopted a total of 99 resolutions, decisions and presidential statements. As already noted, the number of interregional initiatives continues to increase, affirming the Council's capacity to take

action on important human rights issues. To name a few of the new cross-regional initiatives, I could mention the safety of journalists, business and human rights, corruption, and human rights and the environment. An ever-growing number of country-specific issues are also being dealt with in this way.

In the past year, the Council addressed a wide range of human rights issues relating to the freedom of expression and assembly, including by adopting several resolutions in that area on, inter alia, the safety of journalists, peaceful protests and human rights on the Internet. The Council also discussed issues related to the right to development, extreme poverty, the right to food, maternal mortality and the enjoyment of cultural rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

Many of the resolutions were adopted without a vote, again demonstrating the capacity of the Council to agree on issues related to the protection of those most in need. Resolution 19/8, adopted in March, on the freedom of religion and belief is of particular importance, emphasizing that freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

In June, the Council held a constructive discussion on the line between freedom of expression and incitement to hatred and violence. It was a follow-up to the historic Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, adopted by consensus in March 2011, entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief". In that resolution, the Council called on all States and other stakeholders to take concrete measures to foster a national culture of religious tolerance, peace and respect.

It should be pointed out that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also been particularly active in that issue, organizing a series of expert regional workshops on incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, as reflected in international human rights law. The conclusions and recommendations stemming from those workshops will certainly help the Council make progress on that delicate issue.

The number of dignitaries addressing the Council during the high-level segment of the February-March session every year constantly increases, demonstrating the growing interest in the work of the Council as the main human rights body of the United Nations. That is further borne out by the increasing number of civil society representatives attending Council proceedings, as well as parallel events organized on its sidelines. There has been an average of almost 200 accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a hundred side events at each session. New features stemming from the outcome of the Human Rights Council review have been implemented to facilitate remote participation, through video messages, by national human rights institutions that comply with the Paris Principles and of NGOs accredited locally by NGOs with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council so that they can contribute to our work.

The active participation and contribution of civil society organizations are fundamental to the work of the Human Rights Council, making it a unique forum among other United Nations intergovernmental bodies. It is essential to the Council's credibility that human rights defenders and other civil society actors can contribute to the Council's work and its mechanisms in a free, open and safe environment that protects and promotes their own human rights.

In that context, we must deeply lament the increase in the number of reported cases of intimidation or threats, as well as physical attacks on and arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of those who have cooperated with the United Nations, including the Council and its mechanisms. In line with the outcome of the Council's review, I personally have condemned intimidation measures and reprisals in the context or on the margins of the Council and Universal Periodic Review meetings. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on reprisals (A/HRC/21/18) and for sending a clear message of support in that connection when he personally addressed the Council in September, as well as during the panel discussion on that topic at that same session.

I would like to share a few remarks on the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. As the Assembly knows, the first cycle ended with the review of 193 Member States by the Working Group on the UPR, which was a remarkable achievement of a truly universal mechanism. The UPR is certainly seen as a valuable tool for national dialogue and consideration of necessary actions. The second cycle, which began in May, is now considering the implementation of

recommendations made in the past four years and the pending national challenges.

The second cycle will be crucial to consolidating the UPR as a significant tool in addressing the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world in a non-confrontational, objective, depoliticized and constructive way. It is essential to ensure that the main achievements of the first cycle are preserved, in particular the 100 per cent record in terms of the presentation of reports by high-level delegations, which is a first in the United Nations system. I would like to appeal to all Member States to provide support for that valuable universal mechanism and to ensure that it remains comprehensive during the second cycle, in line with its legal foundations and its spirit.

In that regard, many of the participants here today have helped to ensure the presence of delegations coming from countries far from Geneva and without a permanent mission there. In addition, bilateral and regional cooperation has also been extended for the preparation of various national reports. That has been particularly difficult in some cases, and I would like to thank those delegations in particular for their endeavour. The Council has furthered its efforts to support the participation of least developed countries by establishing a Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Council, which provides, inter alia, training and capacity-building.

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly mention the significant challenges facing the Human Rights Council in terms of resources required to continue its activities.

First, allow me to inform the Assembly that a task force has been set up to follow up on certain issues stemming from the outcome of the Council's review process, including the need to enhance secretariat services to the Council, accessibility to the Council's work for persons with disabilities, and the use of information technology. While most of the recommendations of the task force do not require additional resources for their implementation, I would like to emphasize in particular the need to strengthen conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva. That could be done within existing resources by transferring existing vacant translator and editor posts from New York to Geneva. That is, indeed, most important in order to provide adequate conference services for the Universal Periodic Review, which has been underfunded since its work began, in 2008.

As I stated last year (see A/66/PV.49), reports are increasingly not being distributed in all official languages before their consideration. That is a serious impediment for meetings of bodies such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, which relies on the ability of the States to consult and review in advance the documentation for each State under review.

Other recommendations by the task force will require additional resources for their implementation. They deal with, inter alia, the need to ensure sustainable webcast coverage of Council meetings by strengthening the capacity of the Department of Public Information in Geneva, as well as by securing regular budget resources for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for that purpose. Indeed, so far the Office has relied on voluntary contributions to provide that essential service for the Council. Bearing in mind that the Council has no more resources for summary records, it would be crucial to at least be able to secure regular budget resources for the webcast, as it remains the only official archive of the meetings of the Council and the Universal Periodic Review.

Another area where resources are also needed is accessibility of parliamentary or official documents, as well as other fundamental documents, for persons with disabilities.

Allow me now refer to other budgetary issues concerning the Council. This past year 29 resolutions and decisions or presidential declarations have been adopted. The ever-increasing number of special procedures and new mandates to be supported and/or implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner carries significant resource implications. The new resource requirements of Human Rights Council mandates in 2012 — according to the preliminary estimate of the Office of the High Commissioner, which includes conference services — total over $12 million.

In response to urgent mandates created by the Council, the Secretary-General last year submitted proposals to the Assembly on financing unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the Council's resolutions and decisions. However, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended that the existing procedures for meeting

those unforeseen and extraordinary expenses not related to peace and security be utilized. That means that the Secretary-General, and therefore the Council, must explain why additional requirements cannot be immediately absorbed within the approved existing resources. We hope, however, that despite that, the Council will still be able to fulfil one of its principal mandates, which is to respond in a timely manner to emerging human rights crises in the world.

Although I am fully aware of the current financial situation due to the crisis, I would like to rely on the cooperation and support of all Member States in ensuring that those issues are addressed, through the Fifth Committee, by positively considering the best options on how to tackle the funding of the new mandates that arise from the Council's resolutions and decisions, at the same time not forgetting the needs of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly if we want it to deliver more technical cooperation in the face of the increasing requests from the field.

I have held the presidency since June 2011, and my term will end in December this year. I therefore wish to convey my commitment to a successful transition of the Council presidency. Similarly, I hope that the General Assembly will continue to provide its full and efficient support to the Human Rights Council during its seventh cycle, in 2013.

This morning, on behalf of my successor, I invited the President of the General Assembly to attend the opening of the twenty-second session of the Council, on 25 February 2013, and to commemorate on that occasion the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union (EU) would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for presenting the Human Rights Council's seventh annual report (A/67/53) to the General Assembly. We also appreciated the opportunity to hold an interactive dialogue with the Council President.

Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the European Union has been a strong supporter of this main United Nations human rights body. The Council has strengthened the ability of the United Nations to ensure that all persons are able to enjoy all human rights. We attach great importance to its credibility and effectiveness and will continue to make every effort to ensure that it is able to address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and to respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also to improve human rights standards worldwide through systematic work on various thematic issues.

In view of this, the European Union is very pleased to note that the Council has maintained its leadership in addressing human rights situations. In particular, the Council's prompt response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is highly important, including its holding several special sessions and an urgent debate, as well as extending the mandate of the commission of inquiry and establishing a mandate for a special rapporteur, once the commission's mandate has been completed. The Council has also demonstrated its commitment to providing technical assistance and capacity-building to the Governments of Libya, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Afghanistan, Cambodia and South Sudan to promote human rights. The European Union hopes that the Council will continue to follow situations where technical assistance and capacity-building can make a difference and take action where necessary.

Serving as a member of the Council entails important responsibilities. Assembly resolution 60/251 provided that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. We encourage all to pay full attention to the human rights record and human rights commitments of States at the time of the election of members of the Human Rights Council and throughout their membership.

The European Union also attaches the greatest importance to the special procedures, one of the most vital functions of the Council. In order to allow the special procedures to perform their role, it is crucial

that mandate holders are able to independently assess and draw the Council's attention to human rights issues and situations. The European Union welcomes the new mandates established on Belarus and Eritrea, given the deteriorating situation in those countries. We welcome the extension of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Burma/Myanmar and Iran, and the renewal of the mandates of the Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Somalia and Haiti.

Thematic special procedures play an equally outstanding role, through their research, country-specific visits and valuable contribution to the better understanding of the content of specific human rights and their contribution to the enhancement and realization of human rights standards. Among the many thematic special procedures, the European Union would like to highlight the new mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The ability of mandate holders to undertake country visits and establish direct contact with the relevant governmental structures and other national and regional stakeholders, especially civil society, is of crucial importance. We regret the refusal of some Governments to cooperate with mandate holders. All European Union member States have extended a standing invitation to the special procedures, and the EU calls upon all United Nations Members to do likewise and to actively cooperate with them.

Over the years, the Council has also contributed to the further development and understanding of international norms and standards in the field of human rights. The Council is also mandated to monitor the implementation of international human rights law and standards. Only through objective monitoring and reporting can it identify the needs of victims and possible areas for capacity-building and technical assistance to States. We are happy that activities to strengthen international cooperation and develop capacity-building and technical measures remained strong areas for involvement in the Council.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a truly universal mechanism dealing with all human rights and applicable to all Member States without discrimination. Participation by all States in the first cycle is to the great credit of the process. We encourage all States to ensure that universal participation is maintained through the second cycle as well. Ultimately, the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review process depends not only on the quality of the recommendations, but also on the commitment to implement them. The European Union is committed to continuing to support countries in implementing their UPR recommendations.

The Human Rights Council also has an important role to play as a forum for dialogue and exchange of best practices and experiences on a wide range of thematic human rights issues and thus for the advancement of the human rights agenda. The European Union wishes in particular to highlight and welcome the following important developments.

First, enjoyment of human rights by women constituted a major theme at the Human Rights Council during the period under review. The Council strongly condemned all acts of violence against women and girls, and it should continue working on recommendations on how to create and strengthen linkages and synergies among the Council mechanisms and with other relevant intergovernmental processes. On the elimination of discrimination against women, the Council called on States to ensure full representation and full and equal participation in political, social and economic decision-making.

Secondly, the Council adopted guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights as a useful tool for States in formulating and implementing poverty reduction and eradication policies. Thirdly, the Council continued its important work on the rights of the child, with a full-day annual panel discussion dedicated to the issue of administration of justice and an omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, presented jointly by the European Union and the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Fourthly, the Council addressed the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, which is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, by adopting a resolution on the issue of financing.

During the reporting period, the Council also addressed human rights on the Internet and reaffirmed that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression. We believe that this issue deserves continued monitoring.

The European Union reiterates its strong condemnation of acts of reprisal and intimidation of civil society representatives attending the Human Rights Council and cooperating with human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Civil society organizations and national human rights institutions bring extremely valuable contributions to the Council's work. Their ability to interact with the Council must be preserved.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the European Union's strong commitment to contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthening its role to contribute to the development of international human rights law, to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, and to promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): We welcome President Dupuy Lasserre back to New York and thank her for her comprehensive report to the General Assembly on the work of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53).

In the past year, the Council has further consolidated its work and has again shown its readiness to address urgent and grave human rights violations. The Council has proved, better than other United Nations bodies, that it is a voice of accountability for the most serious human rights violations, in full accordance with its mandate.

We welcome the continuous engagement of the Council with regard to the situation in Syria and commend the commission of inquiry for its work, in particular in collecting evidence that can be used in judicial proceedings to hold to account those responsible for the gravest human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, we welcome the Council's call on the Sri Lankan Government to fulfil its relevant legal obligations and commitment to initiate credible and independent actions to ensure justice, equity, accountability and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans for the serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in the final phase of the civil war.

We also welcome the consensus decisions of the Council on the human rights situations in Mali and Eritrea. Unfortunately, the Council did not take urgent action to the extent desirable with regard to the human rights situation in Bahrain.

We welcome the work undertaken by the Human Rights Council on the safety of journalists and on the promotion and protection of human rights in transitional justice. The Council thereby shows its ability to address current and emerging areas of concern to the international community with a view to strengthening safeguards in the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly in situations of fundamental societal and political change. We believe that in executing its mandate the Council should continue to be guided by the principles enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action unconditionally reaffirms the universal nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and commits States to universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Against that background, we have followed with some concern the discussion within the Council on traditional values of humankind. While we understand that there might be added value for States to consider particular circumstances when complying with international human rights obligations, we are also convinced that such circumstances cannot be invoked to alter the fundamental entitlement of any human being to the full protection of her or his human rights — an entitlement that directly derives from her or his inherent dignity as a human being. We hope that the Council will heed those concerns in its future discussions on the issue.

The Human Rights Council has established itself as the central standing body of the United Nations to address all dimensions of human rights questions, including setting standards, implementation and emergency response. This year marks a particular moment in the Council's existence as one of its central instruments to promote and protect human rights — the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) — has entered its second cycle. It is also a time of particular challenges for the UPR. During its second cycle, the UPR must prove its validity in terms of concrete results and improvements in the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.

Progress in the implementation of recommendations is essential to secure the legitimacy of the UPR among

States and civil society. States should make a particular effort to show that a review by their peers can directly benefit citizens of all parts of the world without distinction. The legitimacy of the UPR is grounded not least in the fact that every single State has been reviewed under the process during the first cycle. Preserving the UPR's universality must therefore be the highest priority for States, in particular of the members of the Council, as well as of the Presidents of the Council and the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. States have a collective responsibility in ensuring that the UPR remains a cornerstone of the United Nations human rights architecture.

Refusal to cooperate under the UPR is a direct challenge to the universal and equal applicability of agreements in the field of human rights. Refusal risks taking us back to an understanding that had been overcome, one that plagued the Council's precursor body, where political interests and selectivity often prevailed. We therefore hope that all States will continue to honour the principle of inclusive and transparent multilateralism by again submitting themselves under the UPR.

The review if the status of the Human Rights Council was accomplished just over a year ago by the General Assembly. Not all expectations have been met, but a number of positive achievements can be cited. The existing channels for funding the Council's urgent and extraordinary decisions seem to be open, in principle, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, if not at all times. The consensus to preserve the current institutional relationship among the High Commissioner, the General Assembly and the Council has allowed for a pragmatic approach to improve information-sharing and cooperation within the agreed set-up.

Finally, the realignment of the Council's cycle seems to have benefited both the Council and the General Assembly, while a number of practical implications might still need to be addressed. At the very least, the realignment has allowed us to welcome the current President of the Council twice in New York. We look forward to a fruitful exchange with her in the Third Committee this afternoon.

Mr. Alhajeri (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is discussing today one of the most important items on its agenda. I would like to thank the Human Rights Council for its report (A/67/53), which summarizes the important role that the Council plays in strengthening and defending human rights.

My country's delegation expresses its sincere thanks to the States members of the General Assembly for the trust they placed in the State of Kuwait by electing it to the Human Rights Council for the period from 2011 to 2013. We emphasize the commitment of the State of Kuwait, through its membership in that important body, to exerting its most sincere effort and to dedicating its full potential to strengthening and defending human rights principles and to support the work of the Human Rights Council in combating racism, extremism and discrimination. We also value the constructive activities carried out by Member States in that field.

The advancement of peoples and nations is measured by their respect for human rights. Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations urges Member States to advance the principles of human rights and protect the fundamental freedoms of the individual. That requires us all to stand side by side in our effort to achieve those principles, since the humanitarian aspect must rise above all differences and thus no race, religion or sect may prevent an individual from obtaining all of his or her rights.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes its adherence to the principles of human rights. The Kuwaiti Constitution of 1962 is in harmony with the rules, organizations and conventions on human rights. The Constitution has consolidated those rights, such as the right to life and freedom of opinion and expression. Article 7 of the Constitution states that justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of society and that cooperation and compassion form the bonds linking all citizens. Article 29 provides that all people enjoy equal human dignity, with equal rights and duties before the law and without discrimination based on race, origin, language or religion.

The State of Kuwait believes in the role of civil society institutions and in freedom of the press and expression. It has legislated a number of relevant laws, such as laws no. 3/2006 and 61/2007. Both relate to regulating the work of various media outlets, including print, television and radio, in such a way as to guarantee a more open and democratic atmosphere, whereby the media can address any political, social and economic issues of Kuwaiti public affairs.

Article 31 of the Kuwaiti Constitution refers to the protection of human beings from torture, abuse and indignities. Such an atmosphere of freedom and openness will help to guarantee the creation of a healthy environment and thus generate dialogue exchange and attract visions and ideas from all walks of life. It will also ensure popular participation in expressing and influencing political decision-making in the State of Kuwait. That will in turn guarantee greater strength and stability in my country, leading to prosperity, advancement and innovation.

Article 35 of the Constitution states that freedom of religion and belief is absolute. The State of Kuwait has supported broader dissemination of the cultures of tolerance and understanding through dialogue. In that context, I am pleased to refer to the initiative of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to establish the Universal Centrist Approach Centre, which has hosted several international conferences in support of necessary proposals to counter extremist thought. Furthermore, Government bodies have established programmes targeting all segments of the society with a view to promoting moderate and centrist thought throughout society.

In affirming the established principles of Kuwaiti foreign policy that emphasize strengthened international peace and security, rejection of violence and respect for human rights, my country provides numerous forms of humanitarian aid through governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies, to all peoples, in its endeavours to strengthen human rights and human dignity. It has also increased annual voluntary contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to support its efforts and its mission, as mandated by the Member States.

As we discuss the issue of human rights and the need to respect the humanity of the individual, we cannot but strongly condemn the oppressive Israeli practices and policies that persist in violating the most basic human rights of the unarmed Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We call on the international community to take up its responsibility to force Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by resolutions of international legitimacy, to cease its aggressive, tyrannical policies, and to respect international humanitarian law and the principles of human rights.

The State of Kuwait believes absolutely in the requirement to honour human rights. For its part, it will spare no effort to defend those rights. It stresses that point in its participation in all international forums, including United Nations bodies and governmental and non-governmental organizations relevant to human rights. We affirm the need for sincere cooperation in the sphere of human rights in working towards the greater benefit and security of our peoples, to which we all aspire.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Human Rights Council grew out of the need to confront the double standards, confrontation and political manipulation of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. We must prevent a return in the Council to the harmful practices that plunged the Commission into disgrace. Cuba has clearly stated that it rejects the imposition of those practices. However, we are concerned about the current trend to exalt in the Council selectivity and double standards in its consideration of human rights situations when cooperation and respectful dialogue should guide its work.

Given that reality, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the only existing universal mechanism for making comprehensive assessments of the human rights situation in all countries. It is the main factor distinguishing the Council from the Commission. The UPR has proved itself to be a means for international cooperation on human rights, on the basis of constructive dialogue and respect for the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.

Cuba participated energetically in the process of creating the Council. In addition, my country was an active and successful negotiator at every stage of the review process of the Council, in an effort to perfect and consolidate the work accomplished in its first five years.

However, as we have said, double standards have permeated the Council's work. On the one hand, many countries have emphasized the promotion of themes manipulated according to their own interests, such as country-specific resolutions, commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, despite the significant cost that some entail. On the other hand, those same countries block resolutions presented by developing States, claiming budgetary constraints and arguing that actions must be carried out within existing resources. That dichotomy was widely spoken of in the Human

Rights Council during the period covered by the report before us (A/67/53).

For Cuba, as long as an unjust and exclusionary international economic and political order persists, the Council should continue to speak out in favour of a democratic and equitable international order. As long as unilateral coercive measures are imposed and harsh blockades continue, such as the one Cuba has suffered under for more than 50 years, the Council should reject such practices and demand that they cease.

The special procedures of the Human Rights Council should be guided by respect for the principles of objectivity and impartiality and must respect the code of conduct that was adopted during the Council's institution-building process. The work of human rights treaty bodies should also follow similar guidelines. The Council must ensure that the recovery of the right to international solidarity is not postponed, with a view to tackling the serious challenges presented by serious economic, financial, environmental and social crises, as well as energy and nutrition crises, that plague the planet.

Faced with the tendency that the most developed countries have succeeded in imposing on the Human Rights Council, Cuba reiterates its willingness to cooperate with that body and with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system and its universal and non-discriminatory institutions. We affirm our openness to dialogue with all States, sustained through mutual respect, acceptance of equal sovereignty and recognition of the right of all peoples to choose their own political systems and institutions.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her report today and for her continued dedication to the Council.

The Human Rights Council is responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons. We would like to stress that it was established in order to address violations of human rights and to make recommendations thereon. Since its establishment, the Council has steadily and steadfastly established its track record in the course of actively responding to human rights violations

We particularly appreciate the fact that the Council has acted to address the serious violations of human rights in Syria during its regular sessions and also in four special sessions. Such actions include the establishment of an independent internatic nal commission of inquiry, the commission's special investigation into the atrocities in El-Houleh and the strengthening of the capacity of the commission. It was a conscious decision on the part of the Council to adopt several resolutions on the matter in order to send strong messages to the Syrian Government.

Furthermore, in a sign of progress, some country-specific resolutions were submitted to the Council by various Member States or regional groups, and, upon obtaining cross-regional support, several were adopted by consensus. The Government of Japan supports the use of such a mechanism of the Council to address and respond to human rights violations.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a truly innovative mechanism within the Council, which can effectively improve the human rights situations in all Member States through their voluntary follow-up actions. The second cycle of reviews started this year. It is important that we pay attention to the implementation of the accepted recommendations by each Member State from the first cycle. The second review of Japan was conducted on 31 October, and the draft report of the Working Group was adopted on 2 November. Japan will seriously examine the recommendations by Member States, and our response will be announced in the upcoming Human Rights Council session. The special procedures complement the UPR by addressing particularly serious human rights violations around the world. In that regard, each Member State should issue a standing invitation to the special procedures.

We highly appreciate the initiative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen the human rights treaty body system, and we also welcome the publication of her report on the matter. Japan attaches great importance to improving the efficiency of the working methods of the treaty bodies so that they can make the most of limited resources and effectively implement their mandates as specified in the treaties. It is also important to ensure the independence of the treaty bodies and their members. On the basis of the discussions in Geneva, Japan looks forward to engaging in the General Assembly process to craft reasonable and efficient working methods for the treaty bodies.

Let us remember that the Council was also established to realize the mainstreaming of human rights — that is, to integrate a human rights perspective into all activities of the United Nations. The role of

the Third Committee of the General Assembly, as a universal body that includes all States Members of the United Nations, is also important for that purpose. We expect the Council and the Third Committee to fulfil their roles by making use of their respective advantages.

Japan was elected a member of the Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term at the election held in this Hall during the Assembly's 34th meeting, on 12 November. We appreciate the support and trust shown by Member States. Let me assure the Assembly that Japan is mindful of its great responsibilities. Japan will continue to conduct its diplomacy by promoting such universal values as human rights and democracy and will act for the protection and promotion of human rights in the international community.

Mr. De Léon Huerta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2005, the international community recognized the need to raise the level of treatment of human rights in our Organization by establishing a new body for strengthening the work of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Since then, the Human Rights Council has made progress in fulfilling its important mandate and is developing new tools to bring meaningful change to the lives of millions of people. The Council plays a fundamental role in promoting human rights, preventing new violations and developing guarantees for protection and non-recurrence. It has also been able to document serious violations of human rights in order to combat impunity.

A very relevant feature of the Council is the growing number of States that are ever more open to discussing the human rights challenges they face at national and regional levels. They are also more open to sharing their progress and successful experiences. In that context, numerous developing countries stand out. We hope that all States without exception will adopt a similar attitude. States must recognize that openness and dialogue with the Human Rights Council's mechanisms and cooperation can generate substantial improvement in the exercise of human rights in our countries and regions.

The Council has also shown significant progress in addressing the rights of the elderly and persons of African descent, universal recognition of the rights of migrants, including the right to work, promoting registration of births and preventing discrimination against women, to mention just a few issues.

Mexico is aware that there is much room for improvement in the way in which we address certain questions, in particular national situations, cooperation with special procedures and effective use of the limited existing resources. The institutional agreements on which the Council is based allows for constant evolution of its procedures and mechanisms.

We must recognize that, due to inertia, there is duplication of activities and, in general, we do not promote an adequate division of labour. The Third Committee has an important responsibility for preventing such duplication, promoting appropriate complementarity of efforts and seeking value added in the way we address issues. We must ask ourselves if we are providing due attention to and follow-up on the work of the roughly 47 human rights procedures that in recent weeks were subject to interactive dialogue with the Third Committee.

Given the pressing budgetary needs, it has become necessary to reflect on the way in which States can contribute to an increase in and efficient distribution of the resources on which the human rights machinery depends, as well as to the most efficient use of available resources. In that regard, we also wish to support the remarks to be made later this morning by the Turkish Ambassador on behalf of a large group of countries. Mexico will continue to promote a comprehensive and joint reflection on the topic with a view to achieving concrete results.

The President took the Chair.

The Council must continue to develop international standards for the promotion and protection of human rights, and not fall into unnecessary legislative inflation, the results of which will not necessarily guarantee adequate protection of human rights in the long term. We must promote greater coherence in the international normative framework.

Another institutional challenge for the Council is the need to broaden technical support in its broadest sense. Above all, the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must provide States with tools to create and consolidate efficient regulatory frameworks and implement public policies in favour of human rights.

The second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review presents a fine opportunity to promote plans for cooperation and appropriate follow-up on the

recommendations made. The General Assembly and other bodies of the system must grant high priority to the recommendations of the Human Rights Council, which is the top body the Organization has to promote one of the pillars of the Organization and thus to encourage the incorporation of human rights in all activities of the United Nations. It is our ongoing responsibility to strengthen its efficacy.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her presentation, which provided us with an overview of the developments and activities of the Council as well as of the challenges it is facing.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council was one of the most significant initiatives taken at the United Nations, not only because of its contribution to improving the United Nations human rights structure, but fundamentally because of its capacity and ability to change the politicized environment of confrontation that had characterized the former Commission on Human Rights, which ultimately gave place to the Human Rights Council as a forum for dialogue and cooperation.

The Human Rights Council is strongly expected to be a forum for dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation in achieving the universal realization of human rights, taking into account the cultural and national particularities of different societies. To our great dismay, new concerted attempts are emerging to make the Council a mere political tool for the sake of political ambitions of a few countries. It is deplorable that despite the existence of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism in the Human Rights Council, certain countries still continue to submit country-specific resolutions in the Council and in the Third Committee of the General Assembly. It goes without saying that such resolutions are politically motivated exercises aimed at satisfying the political purposes and interests of their sponsors.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the other developing countries, actively participated in and positively contributed to the reform processes of the United Nations human rights machinery, including those that led to the establishment of the Council, with a view to putting an end to a long-standing politicization and manipulation of the United Nations mechanism by a few countries.

With the successful performance of the first cycle of the UPR mechanism and the launch of the second cycle, it was agreed that the Universal Periodic Review constitutes a breakthrough in United Nations intergovernmental human rights activities. The rationale behind creating such a mechanism was to ensure universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality in the work of the Human Rights Council. The real advantage of the mechanism, in a logical setting, is to allow the human rights machinery to act beyond the control of the monopoly of a few in monitoring the human rights situations of all Member States.

However, the world is still witnessing attempts by a few countries that wish to impose their own views and interpretations on the application of certain internationally agreed concepts and standards. The Human Rights Council should deal with such attempts by designing innovative approaches.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken a genuine and long-term approach to safeguarding human rights by ensuring its full compliance with the relevant international commitments, while upholding the promotion of the principles enshrined in its Constitution. Our policy has continuously emphasized the significance of an interactive and cooperative approach to the promotion and protection of human rights, as stipulated in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as avoiding confrontation, double standards and politicization. Iran's firm commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights includes, inter alia, undertaking measures that lead to the further convergence of the values and principles held by various countries with different cultural, social and historical backgrounds with regard to the issue of human rights.

We welcome constructive cooperation with the United Nations human rights machinery. In their meeting with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his recent visit to Tehran, Iranian officials expressed their readiness to engage constructively with the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Iran has invited the High Commissioner to visit the country. Officials from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights made a preparatory visit in December 2011 so as to facilitate the United Nations High Commissioner's visit. Iran is ready to cooperate with United Nations

special mechanisms that are comprehensive and include all Member States and not a particular group of States.

In that regard, we look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the Human Rights Council in realizing our shared objective of attaining greater global justice, equity and development through the enhancement of human rights for all.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): We would like to make this cross-regional statement on behalf of a group of countries. The statement is identical to that delivered on behalf of 35 countries in Geneva during the most recent session of the Human Rights Council. The countries associated with the statement are Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uruguay.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is experiencing new financial challenges. The High Commissioner recently indicated that the Office would have to cut its budget by 12 per cent in 2013, given its current financial situation. The financial shortcoming is partly a result of the increasing requests and need for the support of the Office, the increasing need for Secretariat support for the human rights treaty bodies and the unprecedented number of new and expanded mandates adopted by the Human Rights Council.. The financial challenge is complicated by OHCHR's reliance on voluntary contributions.

We all have an increasing interest in ensuring that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a leading institution in the promotion and protection of human rights in the United Nations system, can fulfil its mandate faced with the increasing demands on its services. The main aim should be to establish a more sustainable system for funding the OHCHR over the coming years in a manner that balances the various interests of States without infringing on the independence of the High Commissioner and her Office, which operates under the administrative direction and authority of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.

With that in mind, we believe that United Nations Members should work to establish a more sustainable system for ensuring adequate resources for the Office of the High Commissioner by strengthening the funding of the Office, including through coordinated efforts in the Fifth Committee and other relevant United Nations bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in order to secure a substantial strengthening of OHCHR's regular budget over the coming years and to ensure the timely funding of urgent mandates. It could also be achieved by supporting the High Commissioner and her Office in their efforts to strengthen efficiency and to prioritize, by ensuring the necessary space in that difficult exercise for the High Commissioner to manoeuvre in, and by continuing to provide voluntary contributions in order to secure a financial base for OHCHR activities with the help of non-earmarked contributions as far as possible. The current financial constraints should be borne in mind when mandating new activities.

We also support the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office in their efforts to strengthen communication regarding resource requirements and how they could be met, including the possible impact of different budget scenarios on the work of the Office. We support their continued efforts to develop dialogue with States in order to ensure transparency and easy access to information on sources and the allocation of funding to the Office, while preserving the independent role of the High Commissioner.

We believe that the High Commissioner and her Office should take a realistic and sustainable approach to budgeting and should look carefully at the work of the Office to strengthen efficiency and to ensure that OHCHR works in areas where it can add value and has a comparative advantage. The Office should continue to roll out the new performance monitoring system across all OHCHR presences in the field and the Geneva headquarters. That is important in order to measure impact and to identify clear and concrete data on how OHCHR is performing in different areas. In addition, they should expand the donor base and work to achieve as wide a geographical spread of donors as possible.

Mr. Guerber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the strengthening of the work of the Human Rights Council under the presidency of Ms. Lasserre. The presence of the Secretary-General at the Human Rights Council on 11 September was also a notable highlight.

Switzerland approves of the cross-regional approach, which is now becoming more common. That

approach improves the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council and the participative and inclusive nature of the discussions in Geneva. That aspect has been further strengthened by the establishment of a fund to support the participation of less developed nations and of island States.

It is encouraging to note that new subjects have been introduced in the Council, notably gender orientation and sexual identity. However, the tendency that has sometimes been noted to tone down the language related to non-discrimination and gender equality is somewhat worrisome.

In the aftermath of the events in the Near East and North Africa and the citizen movements throughout the world, Switzerland is pleased to have put the subject of the protection of human rights during peaceful demonstrations on the Council's agenda. Discussion of the subject will resume at the Council's next session in March 2013. Switzerland is also pleased about the appointment of and the first report by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (A/HRC/21/46) and that on human rights and the environment (A/HRC/19/34).

Switzerland is proud of the fact that it was examined for the second time in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review during the previous session of the Working Group. The interactive dialogue between Switzerland and the States was the culmination of national consultations organized at various phases of the national preparation for the review. More generally, cooperation among all States during the first cycle of the review represented one of the greatest successes of that mechanism. Switzerland calls for the continuation of that initiative, because it is important not to undermine the universal character of the review. In our view, the implementation of the second cycle of the review also took place under good conditions. We now need to place an emphasis on the follow-up of recommendations and implementation of the relevant measures.

As for the intergovernmental discussions on the strengthening of treaty bodies, Switzerland considers that the aim of the process is to make the present system more efficient, to eliminate duplication of effort and to enable the treaty bodies to fulfil their mandates more effectively, while at the same time guaranteeing their independence. As the co-facilitators stressed in their report to the President of the General Assembly, it is important to focus the discussion on specific issues, while bearing in mind the financing of the system of treaty bodies. Switzerland believes that long-term planning, working methods and the lack of adequate resources should be central elements of any solution.

Finally, with regard to the challenges in funding the activities of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Switzerland endorses the statement made today by the representative of Turkey. Despite the present economic and financial climate, Switzerland calls on Member States to increase the part of the regular budget earmarked for the Office of the High Commissioner and to maintain the level of their voluntary contributions. Switzerland welcomes the statement by the High Commissioner on the subject at the press conference of 18 October in Geneva on the occasion of the renewal of the mandate.

Mr. Orjiako (Nigeria): My delegation welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, and thanks her for her presentation of the report of the Council (A/67/53) to the Third Committee and the Assembly. Nigeria attaches great importance to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are committed to upholding human rights, not just within our borders but in our region and across the world. We are committed to supporting the Human Rights Council as the principal body within the United Nations human rights machinery. We want to see the Council achieve its mandate, as set out in resolution 60/251. We have remained actively engaged with the Human Rights Council in the past six years, during which we actively served as a member.

Nigeria notes with satisfaction the commencement of the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, with the fourteenth session of the Working Group two weeks ago. Judging by the active and enthusiastic participation of the States so far reviewed under the second cycle, we believe that the cycle is off to a good start, and it is our hope that we shall see universal participation in it, just as we saw during the first cycle. Nigeria continues to view the review mechanism as a useful mechanism in the promotion and protection of human rights, and indeed we look forward to our second national review in 2013 during the seventeenth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

The wide range of thematic issues addressed by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council

indicates that the notion of human rights is taking on a broader dimension and is now being mainstreamed into deeper aspects of human development. We are pleased to note that the appointment of the mandate holders reflects equitable geographical representation and regional spread. We commend the mandate holders for the efforts that they have been putting into their work, and we urge them to continue to discharge their tasks impartially and in accordance with their mandate.

People across the world look to the Human Rights Council to promote and protect their human rights, and one way we can assure them that the Council is there to serve their interests is by maintaining the high level of access that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have enjoyed in the Council. Nigeria is pleased with the participation of NGOs in the activities of the Human Rights Council and the freedom they have to express their views on issues under consideration at the sessions of the Council. We believe the Council's engagement with NGOs provides an avenue for the voice of ordinary men and women to be heard and for the cause of victims to be pleaded before that world body.

The considerable number of resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council during the current year is a reflection of the wide array of issues that the Council has had to deal with. However, it is a fact that resolutions come with programme budget implications, which create challenges of funding. Cognizant of the fact that human rights represent one of the key pillars of the United Nations architecture, Nigeria supports the call for the General Assembly to significantly strengthen funding for the work of the Council.

Finally, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to collaborate and cooperate with all States in order to advance the work of the Human Rights Council. As we leave the Council at the end of this year, we would like to send a clear message that our exit from that unique body shall not in any way diminish our interest in its activities or reduce our commitment to its noble ideals.

Mr. Hassan (Malaysia): My delegation warmly welcomes the presence of Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, the President of the Human Rights Council in the General Assembly and her presentation of the report of the Council (A/67/53).

Malaysia, together with the rest of the international community, has high expectations on the work of the Council. Events around the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, have highlighted the magnitude of the work that is facing the Council. Now that the dust is beginning to settle, the citizens of the affected countries are starting to enjoy greater freedom in their lives. However, there is an awareness that there is more to be done. The nascent Governments, while trying not to repeat the missteps of the previous fallen leaders, are currently faced with the delicate task of juggling the call for progress and the need to retain support. Malaysia believes that the Council can play a prominent role in supporting those Governments, especially by guiding them towards a human rights standard that is acceptable to the international community.

Allow me to touch on a few matters relating to the Council. First, on the subject of the Universal Periodic Review, Malaysia is pleased to note the success of the first cycle of the review process. The review is a primary human rights mechanism, premised upon equal treatment of all countries. Malaysia wishes to report that it is in the process of preparing its report for the second review in June 2013. Consultations have been undertaken with Government agencies, and further discussions with civil society actors will also take place before the final report is prepared.

To ensure the full participation of all countries in the review process, Malaysia is of the view that the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, established by the Council in its resolution 6/17, should be strengthened and put to work to provide a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries. That would especially benefit the least developed countries and help them to implement the recommendations emanating from their reviews.

Secondly, my delegation notes the international role played in supporting the process of State-building and national reconciliation in various parts of the world. We wish to reiterate our view that such processes must be driven at the domestic level. It is important that any involvement of external parties must have the consent of the concerned States and should be based on the principles of cooperation and constructive dialogue.

Thirdly, Malaysia welcomes the Council's continued attention to the human rights situation inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We must never forget that the core issue for the Palestinians is their inalienable right to statehood. Malaysia strongly supports the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to an independent State of Palestine,

based on the two-State solution, taking into account the security concerns of both parties. We urge the Council to continue to press the issue and to ensure that the Palestinians are afforded their basic rights as human beings, including their right to an independent State.

Fourthly, regarding the process of strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, Malaysia appreciates the High Commissioner's initiative in conducting consultations with Member States on the subject. Nevertheless, we wish to emphasize that the process should be an intergovernmental one, in which involvement by the States parties in the various treaties in every stage is of paramount importance. We therefore look forward to the open-ended intergovernmental process that is taking place within the framework of the General Assembly to address the challenges pertaining to strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

We hope that the Council will carry on its good work in promoting and protecting human rights for all, and that it will not yield to the agendas promoted in certain quarters. The many achievements to date, which include the successful implementation of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, put the Council in good stead in its promotion and protection of human rights for all. However, Malaysia believes that more can always be done to ensure the promotion and protection for the victims of human rights violations. Malaysia is committed to that end and will continue to strongly support the work of the Council.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation for the statement by Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, before the General Assembly, following her valuable statement in the general debate on the report of the Council (A/67/53) in the Third Committee, in accordance with resolution 65/281.

Since its establishment by resolution 60/251, the Human Rights Council has continuously improved its performance by unifying work standards and has contributed through its machinery to the promotion of universal respect for human rights. All Member States without exception have the duty to implement those mechanisms, which must be applied in a fair and equal manner on the basis of objectivity, impartiality and neutrality, devoid of double standards, politicization and selectivity.

The international community is continuously exerting and consolidating efforts to ensure respect for and protect all human rights, and seeking to restore the balance in international interests between economic, social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and civil and political rights on the other. Moreover, it strengthens our common efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, incitement to hatred and violence on the basis of race, sex, language or religion, including through the implementation of our commitments, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference and the political declaration that the General Assembly adopted by consensus during the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration in September 2011 (resolution 66/3). Despite those efforts, we are still facing challenges owing to the insistence of some countries on invoking the freedom of expression and opinion to justify provocative acts that incite hatred and violence on the basis of religion or belief and that have dangerous implications for international peace and security.

We have an obligation to strengthen and respect the institutional balance between the roles of the principal organs of the United Nations in addressing human rights issues, with a particular emphasis on economic, social and cultural dimensions. In doing so, we must reject the attempts of some to impose their values, concepts and perceptions, as well as the standards of their justice and legal systems, all the while promulgating certain controversial notions that do not take into account the diversity of the social, cultural, religious and legislative values of various nations.

It is therefore incumbent on us to reiterate our commitment not to politicize the Council and to reaffirm its central role in ensuring respect for all human rights and international humanitarian law for all Member States and peoples, without exception or discrimination, in particular in occupied territories, and most importantly, in Palestine. We have to fulfil our responsibility to ensure full compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with all its international obligations, including its commitment to cooperate fully with the Council's resolutions and with the Special Rapporteur and the fact-finding missions mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate gross violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. In that regard, Egypt deplores Israel's decision to suspend its relation with the Human Rights Council. We consider that a dangerous precedent, which will, unless firmly

dealt with, undermine the effective functioning of the Council and its mandate.

Strengthening the role of the Council requires enhancing dialogue and promoting constructive cooperation to ensure the effectiveness of the special procedures system. That is the shared responsibility of the mandate holders, the States and all other relevant parties, which must be based on the principles of transparency, impartiality and mutual cooperation, while ensuring full respect by the special procedures of the mandates and responsibilities established by the Human Rights Council and that Member States fulfil their obligation to cooperate within the respective mandates.

Finally, Egypt stresses the importance of strengthening the principles of transparency and accountability in the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, whether funded from the regular budget or from other sources. We request that the necessary financial resources to support the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in implementing its mandate and to enable it to support and advise Member States, to follow up on the implementation of Council resolutions and to provide the necessary assistance to Member States in the field of capacity-building be sourced from the regular budget of the United Nations. Voluntary conditional funding should be avoided as far as possible. Assured funding will strengthen the role of the Office in supporting the work of the Council.

Mr. Cho Ki-joung (Republic of Korea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to commend the Human Rights Council, under the presidency of Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for the quality of its work over the past year.

The Human Rights Council has rapidly met the urgent need with regard to human rights, particularly in Syria. The Council took the necessary decisions not only through its regular sessions but also by organizing a special session. It sent a clear message to the international community that any violation of human rights must be stopped immediately and responsibility must be apportioned. Such rapid response and effectiveness have further enhanced the primary role of the Human Rights Council as a guarantor of the protection and promotion of human rights.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to warmly thank Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre for her tireless and lofty efforts as President of the Human Rights Council throughout her term of office. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea calls on all Governments and entities involved to respect all urgent requests of the international community through the Human Rights Council.

The Republic of Korea would also like to stress the crucial role of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) procedure. As was the case with the first cycle of the Review, the second cycle has begun very successfully. Better still, during the second cycle, which began this year, we have seen a number of developments.

First, the number of participating countries has increased considerably compared to the previous cycle. Secondly, there have been improvements with regard not only to the number of recommendations submitted, but also to their quality. Thirdly, the majority of delegations of those countries that have been evaluated have been headed by a leading official of the Ministry of Justice. That has allowed the messages of the international community to be transmitted directly to the minister responsible for implementing recommendations.

However, to ensure the full success of the UPR process, it is up to each State assessed to implement the recommendations made. While reaffirming its commitment to the UPR process, the Republic of Korea calls on the Governments concerned to implement all recommendations in order to ensure that there is a tangible improvement in human rights on the ground.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Member States that have provided their valuable support to our country's candidature for election to the Human Rights Council. Through its promises and voluntary commitments, our Government has clearly demonstrated its resolute will to play a constructive role in promoting human rights nationally and internationally. All promises and commitments will be respected during its term of office. The Republic of Korea will spare no effort in undertaking the work of the Human Rights Council, while maintaining close relations with other members and observers of the Council and with civil society.

Ms. Hernando (Philippines): At the outset, allow me to thank the President for this opportunity to speak on the report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53). This agenda item is of particular importance to the Philippines as a founding and current member of the Human Rights Council. My delegation also thanks

Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for presenting the Council's report to the Assembly.

Last year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, which unequivocally establishes development as a right and puts people at the centre of the development process. Yet many children, women and men continue to live in dire need of fulfilment of their entitlement to a life of dignity, freedom and equal opportunity. It is unfortunate that more than 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which articulates our highest aspirations for freedom from fear and want and our commitment to protecting the sanctity and dignity of every human life, regardless of sex, race or creed. Poverty, disease, lack of shelter and illiteracy remain, affecting the realization of a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Philippines is committed to continuing to support advancing discussions on the right to development with a view to its realization. We believe that the establishment of the Human Rights Council, aimed at strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery to ensure effective enjoyment by all of every human right — political, civil, economic, social or cultural, including the right to development — is but one of the manifestations of our continuing faith in and enduring commitment to the values and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The reform process that led to the creation of the Human Rights Council stemmed from the need to elevate human rights to the same level as the pillars of peace, security and equitable economic development, on which the United Nations was founded. Development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. It is only through the observance of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms that we can truly attain peace and social progress.

Since its establishment in 2006, we note that the Human Rights Council has made reasonable progress in fulfilling its mandate, as set out in resolution 60/251. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), with its intergovernmental and peer-review nature, remains an effective mechanism of the Council in ensuring that States fulfil their responsibility to respect and implement human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has spurred greater interest and attention to human rights at the national and international levels and has shown us that all countries, regardless of their level of development, share human rights challenges. We are optimistic that the UPR will continue to help the Council ensure respect for the principles of universality, objectivity and fairness and to institutionalize cooperative and constructive dialogue on human rights in a less politicized and non-selective manner.

In May, the Philippines presented its report for the second cycle of the UPR, which was adopted by the Council in September. My delegation values the UPR as a continuing process, not merely a venue for scheduled reporting and review. We are convinced that the UPR can bring about concrete positive changes in the treatment of human rights on the ground as it addresses human rights issues in a manner that takes into consideration the views of many sectors of society.

The Philippines believes that the primary goal of the Council is to help and to encourage all countries to build an enabling environment, both on the ground and internationally, and to better promote the human rights of their peoples in constructive cooperation with the international community and civil society. We are of the view that a consensual and cooperative approach in dealing with country situations can lead to a more practical and results-oriented outcome. The Council should therefore be a partner of all States and stakeholders in the promotion and protection of all human rights, with a strong focus on capacity-building and international cooperation. It must continue to work in a constructive manner, fostering dialogue and cooperation and engaging in meaningful interaction with States and all stakeholders at the national and international level.

Mr. Balé (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The special procedures play an important role in protecting and promoting human rights. The independence of mandate holders is vital to their work but, as we have repeatedly stressed in the past, it must always be balanced with important considerations, such as professionalism, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness.

As a founding and current member of the Council, the Philippines endeavours to contribute to the efficient and effective work of the Council by working with all States and stakeholders in a constructive manner, fostering dialogue and cooperation and focusing on

the importance of bridging national, regional and international human rights goals, standards and strategies. The Philippines is the main sponsor of initiatives in the Council on human rights and extreme poverty and on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It traditionally sponsors initiatives on the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups, such as migrants, women, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, and is a member of the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training.

Sensitive to the current and emerging human rights challenges and aware that the effective realization of human rights is vital to alleviating poverty and creating a better quality of life for all, my delegation reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Botswana warmly welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly and thanks her for the comprehensive report that she presented to the Assembly (A/67/53).

My delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier in the meeting by the representative of Turkey on behalf of the cross-regional group on the financial challenges of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Botswana is fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, both at home and abroad. We attach great importance to the work of the Council as we believe that it continues to make a positive impact on Member States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. However, we believe that much more remains to be done.

Botswana commends the Council for the work that it has achieved at the recently concluded session. The decisions taken on various thematic and country mandates will go a long way in assisting the countries concerned to address the challenges that they face in the protection and promotion of human rights.

However, we are concerned about the situation of human rights violations in a number of countries that are on the Council's agenda, in particular the situation in Syria. We further call on the Security Council to take the necessary measures to compel the Government of Syria to end the impunity and violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Syrian people. The extension of the mandate of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic is also a commendable decision of the Council. We hope that the concerned parties will cooperate with the commission and allow it to successfully carry out its mandate.

We have taken note of the challenges and constraints of the Office of the High Commissioner, particularly in the past year. In that regard, Botswana has continued to engage actively in the work of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We have positively engaged with various special procedures mandate holders in support of their work despite the challenges that they face in carrying out their mandates.

We also share the High Commissioner's concerns about resource constraints and the increasing workload of the Human Rights Council. Our abiding faith in and commitment to supporting the Office of the High Commissioner is demonstrated by our response to calls for human rights appeals, both political and financial, and to the work of the special procedures and mandates that emanate from the Human Rights Council.

My delegation is also pleased by the work carried out under the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. We take particular note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the use of children in armed conflicts and reiterate our support to guard against impunity and the violation of children's rights in all situations, including armed conflict.

We also recognize the valuable role and the contribution of the human rights treaty bodies to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Their effective functioning remains critical. We are confident that the ongoing intergovernmental process on the strengthening of the human rights treaty body system will enhance efficiency in the financing and working methods of such bodies and will complement efforts to promote the development agenda of the Human Rights Council.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate Botswana's support for the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. We hope to achieve our aspirations in that regard.

Mr. Lukiyantsev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, allow me to thank Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights

Council, for presenting the report on the work of the Council (A/67/53).

Today, it can be confidently said that in the period since the Council's establishment, that body has become one of the key elements of the international human rights architecture called on to help the development of constructive inter-State cooperation in that area. The Council has specific qualities that distinguish it positively from its predecessor, the Human Rights Commission.

However, a worrying trend increasingly seen in the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular in recent years, is emerging. Unfortunately, its work continues to be characterized by the polarization of various groups of States, making it difficult to hold a meaningful and constructive discussion of human rights issues. There is concern about the continuing practice of many States and groups of countries to use human rights as an instrument of political pressure, imposing foreign value systems without taking the national historical, economic, and sociopolitical characteristics of States into account.

We continue to see attempts to divide States into two categories — the bad and the good, the students and the examiners — undermining the intergovernmental nature of the Council. Such an approach fundamentally contradicts the initial purpose of the Council as a body created to develop dialogue and cooperation. The Council must work in the interests of all Member States without exception and not give preference to any one nation's individual needs.

In that regard, we would like to once again draw attention to the basic principles of the Human Rights Council: universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. We are firmly convinced that unless those principles are respected, we cannot foster genuine, constructive, mutually respectful international dialogue and cooperation to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the Council's work as a whole will be doomed to fail. We must recognize the fact that the primary responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights lies with States themselves and that the basic task of the international community resides in providing them with technical, results-oriented assistance.

One of the most important functions of the Council, pursuant to the provisions of resolution 60/251, is to conduct the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situations in Member States. Russia supported the creation of that procedure in the hope that holding such a review on the basis of equality and mutual respect would help to reduce confrontation in inter-State discussions of human rights. We are convinced that in the future the Universal Periodic Review must to a great extent replace the discredited practice of lopsided and politicized resolutions on the human rights situations in individual countries. The review procedure has considerable potential, but that can be realized only if there is genuine universality, without exception or exemption from the general rules.

One of the most important instruments that the Council can use to implement its mandate is the system of special procedures, which is a legacy of the Human Rights Commission. Unfortunately, along with some benefits of the special procedures system, it has shortcomings, which have been justly criticized. It is important that the future functioning of human rights mechanisms move towards depoliticization. That can be guaranteed by unswerving respect in the special procedures, a principle adopted by Member States at the sixty-second session in resolution 62/219, setting out the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council.

On the subject of cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we believe it to be of fundamental importance to strictly follow the provisions of resolutions 48/141 and 60/251, which clearly define the place and role of the High Commissioner and the Office of the High Commissioner in the United Nations human rights structure. We believe that the work of the Office of the High Commissioner should focus on enhancing dialogue and cooperation with States in order to provide them with assistance in guaranteeing human rights and freedoms.

In that regard, we suggest that such important mechanisms as the biennial Strategic Management Plan of the Office of the High Commissioner should be reviewed by the Human Rights Council before being presented to the General Assembly. However, we should have a genuine dialogue among Member States rather than a mere mechanism for collecting views, as was done this year. That would allow the High Commissioner to get a clearer picture of the current needs of various States in promoting and protecting human rights, and the Office could thereby design its work in a more targeted way.

In order to ensure that human rights become a real element of everyone's lives, it is important not only to recognize their juridical definition but to make a fresh consideration of the moral dimension. That dimension is first and foremost reflected in traditional human values that have developed in our societies over millennia and are reflected in religions, cultures and customs. I refer to such traditional values as dignity, responsibility, freedom, work, the family and mutual respect. Such moral principles must form the foundation of social life and become the cement that binds nations, peoples and ethnic groups. We firmly believe that if traditional values are respected in the relationship between human rights and traditional human values, they will bolster respect for human rights and their universal enjoyment. We believe that an excellent starting point on this theme was the discussion initiated by Russia in the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Lasserre, and reaffirm our determination to continue our constructive cooperation with her, working to guarantee that all human rights are addressed in a fair, impartial, equitable and non-selective way, free of the pitfalls and ploys of politicization and double standards that undermine many of our accomplishments here in New York and in Geneva.

My country, as is well known, participated actively in creating the Human Rights Council in Geneva and in the consensual activities that led to its formation. Therefore, everything pertaining to human rights lies at the heart of Syrian foreign policy.

We have read with deep interest the Council's report (A/67/53), which covers extremely important topics, especially information about violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, the Syrian Golan and the Palestinian territories. The Syrian Golan has been under an unjust Israeli occupation for 45 years, and despite the Human Rights Council's demands that Israel, the occupying Power — to use United Nations language — implement the resolutions of all the bodies and agencies of the United Nations, including of course the Human Rights Council, Israel continues to flout said resolutions. The Israelis continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity and to openly boast of their crimes, unhindered by any punishment or accountability, while international public opinion continues to ponder seriously why it is that they are exempt from prosecution and accountability.

We can only express our concern about the efforts of some parties to turn the Human Rights Council into a private and prefabricated sector that works within narrow political parameters that serve the agendas of some influential States and contradict the spirit and mandate of the Human Rights Council itself. We say this because some, unfortunately, have succeeded in turning back the clock to the time of the Human Rights Commission and are once again politicizing the work of the Human Rights Council.

This was made abundantly clear when resolutions were adopted in which the Council condemned the violations of human rights in some developing countries but continued to ignore and dismiss mechanisms to address human rights situations and their violations in so-called developed States. In those States, racism is rampant, as are xenophobia, racial discrimination, discrimination against indigenous people and immigrants, and inhumane and abusive treatment of detainees and refugees. These countries have militarily invaded sovereign States Members of the United Nations and, more important, violated their right to development by adopting unilateral, coercive economic measures against the peoples of developing countries. The list goes on.

Unfortunately, some Western States have adopted a double standard in their understanding of terrorism. There is the terrorism that others perpetrate, which must be fought by all means and methods. Some States have even gone to extremes in combating such terrorism and stressing the need to uproot and condemn it. That is, in their view, the first kind of terrorism; the second is the kind that those Western States themselves perpetrate. That is acceptable terrorism, which can be committed without drawing any criticism. On the contrary, it can be defended. This is a dangerous precedent and a stain on the record of the Human Rights Council and on the logic of international relations.

I would like to provide a real example from Egypt in 1906. In a small village called Denishwei, soldiers and officers from the British occupation at the time wanted to go on a hunting trip. They violated the sanctity of women in that village, whose people rose in protest against those unwanted visitors. Many people were killed, including one British officer. The result was that the British occupation organized an impromptu

field court in the village of Denishwei and sentenced dozens of its residents to death. That is why it is known as the massacre of Denishwei. A well-known Egyptian poet named Hafez Ibrahim was a contemporary of that massacre. He described the massacre in a line of poetry that says that killing an individual, even in a jungle, is an unforgivable crime, but killing peaceful people is a controversial issue.

The four resolutions pertaining to Syria and mentioned in the report of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/19/1, A/HRC/RES/19/22, A/HRC/RES/20/22 and A/HRC/S-19/2) were based on unilateral media reports. The texts of those resolutions were drafted using misleading and hostile terms and language that were without precedent in their hatefulness towards the Syrian people and Government. They condemn only one side — the Syrian Government. Not in a single paragraph do they demand an end to violence or to the disarming of the armed terrorist groups, or that a national dialogue be launched to resolve the crisis peacefully on the basis of the six-point plan, the Geneva declaration and the Brahimi commission.

These resolutions go even further. Their sponsors, who claim to defend the human rights of the Syrian people, have neglected to mention the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in Syria, which is a result of the coercive unilateral economic measures that have been imposed on the Syrian people by the States members of the European Union, the United States and, unfortunately, some Arab States. This occurred despite the fact that the report of the independent international commission of inquiry (A/HRC/21/50), which was established by the Human Rights Council itself, noted the impact of the economic measures on the livelihoods of the Syrian people. Needless to say, these coercive measures threaten the sovereignty and independence of States and flagrantly violate the Charter of the United and the principles of human rights.

I can only say that it is regrettable and shameful for the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to have been the first to impose these inhumane sanctions on the Syrian people, in direct violation of their human rights. It is also shameful for many of the rich countries who are members of those two organizations not to offer a single dollar in assistance to the Syrian people, while they channel millions of dollars to terrorist mercenaries and Al-Qaida elements to enable them to shed the blood of innocent Syrians and destroy the Syrian State.

Recently, *The Telegraph*, a British newspaper, published an important article on a British doctor named Shajul Islam. He had decided to go and wage jihad in Syria, so he left his career as a physician in Britain and went to Syria to wage jihad. The British newspaper described this man as a doctor by day and a terrorist by night in Syria. Yet there are those who still insist that there is no terrorism in Syria, no armed groups in Syria and no ships arriving from Libya laden with weapons and endowed with Qatari funding and operational facilities from Turkey, to be used to kill the Syrian people.

My country is experiencing a humanitarian crisis, the reasons for which are well known. Terrorism has struck my country because of the systematic violations perpetrated by members of terrorist armed groups that are funded and backed from outside. The foreign backing of these armed groups and their vital role in what is happening in Syria have been clearly proved, and evidence thereof is now in the hands of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

My country's Government has offered every form of cooperation with a view to arriving at a solution to the humanitarian crisis and the deteriorating economic conditions. Damascus has received and continues to receive delegations from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross and many other international delegations, whether political, spiritual or media-related.

My country has also accepted the revised response plan and granted permission to many non-governmental organizations to participate in the plan in order to respond to humanitarian needs. We also guarantee entry visas to humanitarian aid workers and have issued licenses and eased all bureaucratic measures to allow OCHA to conduct field visits to many areas inside Syria without delay. As Council members and the President of the Human Rights Council know, we have participated constructively in the six meetings of the Syrian Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva.

Despite all that, some nations that are known to support terrorism in my country continue to try to demonize the Syrian Government and to portray it as a killer of its own people, while completely ignoring the presence of armed terrorist groups in Syria and the

Syrian Government's duty to combat those groups and those that back them.

Here, I would like to stress that the solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria is not through the political animosity of some States members of the Council towards Syria in order to settle old and new scores with us. Nor will it be achieved by fanning the flames of discord or by funding or harbouring armed terrorists and encouraging them to perpetrate massacres and terrorist bombings against Syrian civilians.

Instead, a solution can be achieved by abiding by the principle of providing humanitarian assistance, in particular under resolution 46/182, which determines the mechanisms and conditions for providing humanitarian assistance to States Members of the United Nations. A solution could be ensured if donor States and bodies were to demonstrate the political will to provide what has been pledged and to end the policy of imposing unilateral economic measures.

The politicized resolutions of the Security Council hamper and will continue to impede efforts to establish a Human Rights Council that addresses all human rights violations in the world on the basis of clear standards that apply to all without discrimination. Such resolutions obstruct the impartial role of international parties in putting an end to the crisis in Syria. Instead, they actually encourage more inflexibility, the rejection of national dialogue and continued armed violence, killing and bloodshed. They will hamper any of the steps recently taken by Syria to foster cooperation and openness towards international missions.

In conclusion, we hope to see Ambassador Lasserre use and intervene with her significant moral weight, which we acknowledge and respect, to demand that the States involved in harbouring, arming, supporting and financing the armed groups stop what they are doing to all Syrian people and the entire Syrian State and society. Those States are responsible for terrorizing Syrian citizens and inciting them to flee their homes, thereby turning them into refugees, and for using armed terrorist groups as a tool to destabilize Syria, to strike at the unity and cohesion of its people, and to create a prefabricated humanitarian problem that seeks to stain Syria's image and to harm its international record as a people and a State.

Mr. Och (Mongolia): First of all, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for the introduction of the Council's report (A/67/53). As we can see from the report, in recent times continuous efforts have been made by the Council to respond to numerous human rights situations around the world.

It has been highlighted on many occasions that human rights are increasingly interrelated with the efforts of the international community for peace, security and economic and social development, for the promotion of democracy and other advances. My delegation fully shares that view. In that respect, I wish to underline the importance of actions taken by the Council, the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies, and reaffirm our full support for the efforts of the Council to fulfil its mandate.

Today, we are witnessing an unprecedented international quest for the effective implementation of human rights. As we all know, our leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights at the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, held last September (see A/67/PV.3). There is an impressive record of accession to and ratification of international human rights instruments, as well as the establishment of national human rights machinery by many countries. Nevertheless, numerous human rights challenges persist, including poverty, discrimination, religious intolerance, armed conflicts, refugee flows, arbitrary executions and the impact of the pervasive economic and financial crisis. One of the latest examples is the ongoing conflict in Syria, with its devastating consequences on civilians.

Those challenges call on Member States to implement sound policies at the national level and to promote enhanced cooperation at the international level. Moreover, the States concerned need more substantive support from the international community to address such issues through enhanced technical assistance and advisory services aimed at capacity-building and human rights education. It is gratifying to note in that regard that the Council has made great strides to support States in implementing their human rights obligations, to advocate the promotion and protection of human rights and to advance the process of strengthening the treaty bodies.

Over the past 20 years, Mongolia has been actively engaged in carrying out an extensive legal reform aimed at bringing national laws in line with international standards. Thus, Mongolia is undertaking step-by-step

measures to amend the existing legislation with the aim of abolishing the death penalty in law and practice.

Among others, Mongolia attaches great importance to the implementation of its reporting obligation under the human rights treaties. Thus, the first national human rights report of Mongolia was reviewed in 2010 under the Universal Periodic Review, a unique mechanism for promoting human rights worldwide.

We have shown consistent support for the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. In October, an independent group of experts appointed by the Human Rights Council visited Mongolia to examine the human rights impacts of business activity in Mongolia. I am pleased to note that it was the first country mission of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights since its establishment in June 2011. My Government attaches particular importance to the issue of examining and addressing the impacts that businesses have on the human rights of its people. Consequently, the emphasis on human rights has been made in the action plan of the new Government for 2012-2016.

It is gratifying to note that the Working Group focused on identifying negative impacts, but also positive impacts that business activities could have on the full spectrum of human rights, from creating employment to driving economic growth. As Ms. Margaret Jungk, a member of the Working Group, highlighted in her statement summarizing the work of the mission, the key challenge for any country, especially one that is undergoing rapid economic development like Mongolia, is to maximize these positive effects and, at the same time, minimize the negative effects.

Once again I wish to express our gratitude to the Working Group for its important findings and recommendations. I am confident that due attention shall be given to those recommendations and to the respective actions taken by the Government and businesses in Mongolia. We also look forward to receiving soon the final report of the Working Group, which is expected to be submitted to the Council in June 2013.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government's commitment to continued cooperation with the Council, as expressed by our Foreign Minister during his meeting with the President of the Council in October in Geneva. As the Assembly is well aware, Mongolia, in its desire to make an active contribution to the work of the Council, presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the elections to be held in 2015. It is my earnest hope that, with the support of fellow member States, we will succeed in our endeavours.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for having presented the Council's annual report (A/67/53). We appreciate her able stewardship in taking forward the work of the Council over the past year. We welcome the opportunity to interact with her and share our views on the activities of the Council.

My delegation has had and still has high expectations of the Human Rights Council, the principal body of the United Nations dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council, with its institutional machinery such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, the special procedures, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and the complaint procedure, is truly in a position to contribute to significant improvements in the enjoyment of human rights.

By establishing the Council, our predecessors intended to usher in a new era in the human rights discourse and to introduce a new culture when it comes to dealing with human rights. We are disturbed by the news of increasing polarization in the Council. That is not a good sign. If we do not move away from that path and seek mutual respect and understanding, the body may soon be as discredited as its predecessor, the Commission for Human Rights.

It is important to nurture the Council as a forum that fosters dialogue and cooperation instead of divisiveness and confrontation. We should focus efforts on making human rights mechanisms more transparent, accountable and balanced so that real change can be brought to the realm of human rights protections. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said, all victims of human rights abuses should be able to look to the Human Rights Council as a forum and a springboard for action.

The creation of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism was one of the most significant innovations in the area of human rights. Its greatest strength lies in its universality, with all countries facing scrutiny regardless of their region, size or influence. This peer review mechanism aims to create an environment of mutual trust, confidence and understanding. If we can

exploit its full potential, the mechanism may change the culture of human rights discourse. With the second cycle of the UPR in motion, we expect it to be developed into a more meaningful and effective mechanism so that we can eventually get rid of naming and shaming through the controversial country-specific mechanisms.

Our delegation shares the view that the system of special procedures is important to ensure the effective promotion and proper protection of human rights. The streamlined appointment procedure for mandate holders can be mentioned in that connection. The selection process may be further improved, inter alia, through efficient outreach and periodic updating of the roster. With the code of conduct in place, we believe that the special procedure is on the right track to garner the greater legitimacy it has lacked. However, there are still reports of non-compliance with the code, which was very meticulously crafted and unanimously adopted in the Human Rights Council. We would emphasize the critical importance that the mandate holders abide by the code of conduct and remain within their respective jurisdictions for the proper functioning and credibility of the procedure.

On the creation of new mandates, the Council should be careful to avoid unnecessary proliferation or attaching undue importance to a particular group of rights or thematic areas. In total, there should be a balance between the two major groups of rights. The Council should also avoid bringing in controversial issues or norms that are not universally accepted through any loopholes.

The relationship of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with the Human Rights Council remains an issue. We attach great importance to the position of the High Commissioner in promoting and protecting human rights. High Commissioners have, over the years, played an important role in upholding human rights all over the world. We support non-interference in her activities. However, as is the case in other bodies of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council should have oversight responsibility. That issue should be considered at an appropriate time.

The Council is organizing ever more special sessions to deal with human right emergencies. The initiative, nevertheless, has to date remained focused on country situations. There are critical thematic issues that deserve urgent attention. We had one such session on the impact of the financial crisis on human rights couple of years ago. There should be many more such sessions on contemporary issues of importance. I could mention, for example, the incitement of hatred on the Internet. There is an urgent need to address such developments before they create further divisions in society and breed further intolerance and hatred.

As the workload of the Council continues to increase, we cannot and should not ignore its financial needs. It is a pity that the Council is not provided with sufficient money to function properly. A mechanism like the UPR suffers due to inadequate budget provisions for translation services. If we want to see it work as a robust body, we have to ensure that the requisite means are at its disposal. We would urge the General Assembly to take this into consideration when budgetary questions are considered in the relevant Committees.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for the report on the work of the Council (A/67/53) and her briefing. We reiterate our unconditional support for the main body of the Organization devoted to human rights.

Today we are considering the content of the report delivered pursuant to the agreements reached in resolution 65/281. Given the importance of this topic, we thank the Chairman of the Third Committee for having refrained from scheduling Committee meetings at the same time as those of the General Assembly, and we encourage the continuation of this practice.

The work of the Council during the reporting period has been commensurate with the challenges faced by the Council. This should continue and to that end we should meet its financial needs, among other things. The successful conclusion of the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review was an important achievement. We encourage all States to take part in the second cycle with the same enthusiasm and to commit at the highest level to applying its recommendations. We need to seek recommendations that are ever more specific and concrete and seek mechanisms for cooperation to build the national capacities needed to implement them.

Costa Rica has been a member of the Human Rights Council since June 2011. It is from that position of undoubtedly great responsibility that we address this meeting. Within and outside of the Council, our country cooperates actively on the promotion and protection of human rights. We are guided by the

principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-politicization, constructive dialogue and cooperation.

Costa Rica is working actively in interregional groups and seeking to build bridges and contribute to the effective implementation of the decisions and resolutions issued by the Council. Working with other countries and through long-term dialogue and negotiations, we have focused in particular on areas such as human rights education and training and the relationship between human rights, climate change and the environment.

As part of a like-minded group of countries, we were able to bring about the adoption of the United Nations declaration on human rights education and training and the second phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. Furthermore, at the twenty-first session, held last September, we sponsored a new and successful resolution that follows up on the Programme (A/HRC/RES/21/14). The resolution was sponsored by 85 delegations and adopted by consensus.

During the nineteenth session, we reached consensus in the Council on establishing the post of independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (see A/HRC/RES/19/10).

We have also sought to contribute, as Chair of the Council's situations group, and specifically through Ambassador Christian Guillermet-Fernández, to fostering renewed involvement by members and generating greater credibility and efficacy in that body.

Another of our Council priorities has been the promotion of the human right to peace. In that regard, we should like to highlight the resolution adopted at the twentieth session that establishes a working group to progressively negotiate a draft declaration on the subject (A/HRC/RES/20/15). As a country with no army, which has entrusted its very existence to the proper functioning of the multilateral system, that codification initiative has been of great importance.

Our commitment to the cause of human rights is not merely a key component of our foreign policy, it also has deep roots in our national identity and practices. We have had mandatory and free primary education for both boys and girls since 1869. We abolished the death penalty in 1882 and our army in 1949. We continue to honour that historic tradition with a significant investment in social development and the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. Costa Rica was the first country to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We played a key role in the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

More recently, we have been working constructively and actively in Geneva and New York in the review process of the Human Rights Council and the process aimed at strengthening the treaty bodies. We have extended an open invitation to all special procedures of the United Nations, and we are ready and willing to cooperate effectively with the human rights mechanisms.

Costa Rica would like to continue to cooperate constructively with the work of the Council and has therefore presented its candidacy for re-election for the period from 2014 to 2017. We are committed to remaining open to dialogue and transparency concerning our actions in that body.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): Let me first of all extend our appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for being here with us today and for the presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53) to the General Assembly for this session.

We take note of a number of important milestones achieved in the wake of an eventful and highly productive year for the Council and welcome the leadership role taken by the Human Rights Council on the most pressing and urgent matters before the international community, where other United Nations organs have failed.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend our sincere congratulations to all Member States that were recently elected to the Human Rights Council for the term from 2013 to 2016. Maldives looks forward to working closely with those delegations in Geneva in a constructive manner on all issues before the Council when they assume their seats.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Maldives has continued to play an active part in supporting the promotion and protection of human rights in the international arena as well as domestically.

We will continue to work within the Council with other Member States, United Nations bodies and civil society to ensure that universal values on the promotion and protection of basic rights are upheld and respected by all States Members of the United Nations.

Since assuming its seat on the Council in 2010, Maldives has collaborated with all delegations on numerous issues that we deemed important to the effective functioning of the international human rights machinery. In March, during the nineteenth session of the Council, Maldives, along with a core group of countries, submitted a draft resolution entitled "Human rights and the environment" (A/HRC/RES/19/10), which established a special mandate holder to look into the relationship between human rights and the environment. We believe that the protection of the environment and human rights are intrinsically linked, and we hope that the work of the independent expert on human rights and the environment will bring to fruition the core interests of Member States at the national, regional and international levels on this important issue.

Maldives also worked with a cross-regional group of countries to create a voluntary trust fund to support activities designed to enhance and improve the capacities of least developed countries and small island developing States in order to encourage their effective participation in the work of the Council. The resolution (A/HRC/RES/19/26), which had 113 sponsors, with broad cross-regional support, establishes a strong mandate to encourage smaller delegations to participate more effectively and actively in the consultative and decision-making processes on human rights matters. The initiative was also important to a number of delegations that do not have diplomatic representation in Geneva. It provided them with a mechanism through which their contributions to the Council can be facilitated, and it upheld the principle of universal participation in all matters relating to human rights.

During the twenty-first session of the Council, in September, Maldives, along with a number of other key partners, continued to support the initiative on the right to freedom of assembly and of association. This year's resolution (A/HRC/RES/21/16) was focused on the role of civil society in promoting the freedom of assembly and association. In 2012, the same group of countries created the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. We believe that is a substantial cross-regional achievement in the light of the Arab Spring and the ongoing efforts to promote human rights by members to add value to the revolutionary changes on the ground.

On the domestic front, Maldives is currently engaged in a process to consolidate its newly formed democratic institutional framework. While the country is faced with a number of challenges in that endeavour, emphasis has been given to the most immediate measures, such as enhancing the administration of justice, strengthening independent institutions and oversight mechanisms, and improving the capabilities of law enforcement agencies. Those reforms are aimed at ensuring that human rights and greater freedoms are effectively implemented, as stipulated under the Constitution of Maldives.

The Human Rights Council, in our view, has largely been a success and a force for good. In recent times, we have all too often seen the politics of diplomacy impede the work of United Nations bodies with little or no regard to the basic rights of ordinary people, which we are committed to protecting. The lack of consensus and the impotence of the Security Council are one such example demonstrating that members need to do more in working together to overcome their differences.

The work of the Human Rights Council on matters relating to the situation of human rights in respective countries has been commendable, and Maldives will continue to strongly support mechanisms in the Council that are aimed at the independent investigation of atrocities committed in countries, especially in such tumultuous times as these, with a view to enabling transparent, open and inclusive processes that would effectively uphold the basic tenets of why the Human Rights Council was created in the first place.

On the issue of Palestine, Maldives will continue to support the creation of an independent State of Palestine, living side by side and at peace with the State of Israel. We remain, however, deeply concerned by the repeated violations of the human rights of the Palestinians living under appalling conditions in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, Maldives looks forward to an active year in the Council, and we would like to see a continued focus on the situation in the Middle East. We would also like to see the active participation of all Member States in the work of the Council, especially the small island developing States and the least developed countries.

Maldives attaches great importance to the advancement of women and the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. During our membership of the Council so far, Maldives has been a strong supporter of the Universal Periodic Review process and has supported various initiatives in the Council that would further enhance and improve multilateral efforts to promote human rights domestically and globally.

Mr. Elbahi (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation expresses its thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for the comprehensive statement that she delivered here and the one that she will deliver to the Third Committee later today, in accordance with resolution 65/281. We wish her every success in accomplishing her tasks.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council six years ago was an important achievement for the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs in addressing human rights issues on the basis of the equality of all member States, and as reflected in the Universal Periodic Review, to which all members without exception are subject. The Council also provides advice, in accordance with its mandate set out in resolution 60/251, through the special procedures system. That is an important service provided that mandate holders adhere to the principles of impartiality and avoid politicization and selectivity, according to the text of the mandates and the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council, adopted by the Council in its resolution 5/2 and re-emphasized in its resolution 11/11 of June 2009.

In reiterating the Sudan's cooperation with the Human Rights Council, it is my pleasure to report that the Sudan submitted its first report to the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva last year, accepted its recommendations and established a special mechanism to implement them. The mechanism is a high-level national commission under the Advisory Council on Human Rights, which is the highest Government authority for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Sudan. Those positive developments, which were included in the report, in addition to the Sudan's signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, have been welcomed by the Council. My delegation reiterates once more its readiness to abide by and implement all the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review.

At its most recent session, the Human Rights Council unanimously decided to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan in order to provide technical assistance under agenda item 10. The decision represented the Council's recognition of the positive developments in the human rights situation in the Sudan and clearly reflects the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to promote and protect human rights. My delegation welcomes that decision and hopes that the Independent Expert will help the new national human rights commission to become fully operational, on the basis of the Paris Principles. During the first five months of its existence, the commission has drawn up a comprehensive plan of action to protect and promote human rights, in cooperation and coordination with national and international partners.

In addition, my country has seen several positive developments that will certainly contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Sudan. They include the establishment of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority under the Doha Darfur Peace Agreement, a special court for Darfur, and the post of special prosecutor for Darfur.

The Government has accepted the humanitarian mandate for Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. Moreover, in an economic initiative for the two States, a series of measures have been adopted to expand agriculture, including the heightening of the Roseires Dam in Blue Nile province. In Abyei, the deployment of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei is complete, and the signing of the nine sub-agreements on cooperation with our sister country, the Republic of South Sudan, represents the culmination of many efforts.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for sufficient funds to be made available to enable the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to thoroughly fulfil their responsibilities, notably by giving economic, social and cultural rights the same priority accorded to civil and political rights and by opposing the tendency to exploit concept of the freedom of expression and opinion to insult religions, faiths and creeds, or to justify acts that incite hatred and violence based on religions or creeds. We also ask the Council to avoid the inclusion of controversial concepts in its work.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 57/32 of 19 November

2002, I now give the floor to the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Bermeo Estrella (Inter-Parliamentary Union): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) continues to work for stronger parliamentary engagement with existing United Nations mechanisms to enhance respect for human rights. Since the beginning of the year, the work has centred in particular on associating parliaments more closely with the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism.

The IPU believes that parliaments have a critical role to play to ensure that the UPR becomes ever more effective. Parliaments, through their legislative, oversight and budgetary functions, can directly contribute to the success of the UPR. However, a study that we conducted in 2009 to assess the extent to which parliaments were involved in the UPR process found that the vast majority were not even aware of the existence of the UPR.

The IPU has therefore made it a priority to raise awareness among parliaments about the UPR and about the contribution that they can make to it. From the beginning of this year, the IPU has systematically informed parliaments of the forthcoming examination of their countries' national reports. We have started to organize capacity-building workshops for parliamentarians to promote a better understanding of the UPR and of the role of parliaments. As part of those efforts, earlier this week the IPU, together with the Commonwealth Secretariat, brought together more than 70 parliamentarians and staff from some 30 countries. Without exception, participants underscored our earlier findings that once parliaments knew about the UPR, they wanted to be associated with it.

The question, of course, is how to do that. There is no doubt that parliaments have a key role to play in helping to ensure that UPR recommendations are translated into national action. However, should parliaments also contribute to the drafting of the report? There are some who say it should not, because it is the preserve of executive branches and because parliaments would otherwise compromise its independence. However, others believe that nothing prevents parliaments from contributing to the report and subsequently holding Governments to account for the implementation of the UPR recommendations. Whichever side one would choose, there seems to be consensus that, as a minimum, parliaments need to be informed of the report and should have a possibility to debate it before it is sent to the Council in Geneva.

Should members of parliament also be part of the official delegation presenting the report to the Council? Again, opinions differ — largely for the same reasons as those related to parliaments' contributions to the drafting process. However, no one seems to disagree that there is great merit in allowing members of parliament, in an observer capacity as part of their official delegation or otherwise, to attend the interactive dialogue in the Council on their countries' situation. As a result, they will gain direct insight into the functioning of the UPR and get first-hand impressions of how the executive fared in the process, in particular how it responded to questions and concerns from the Council and what commitments it decided to undertake.

Ideally, parliamentarians attending the Council's sessions should represent both the majority and opposition parties in parliament and work directly on human rights issues, such as members of dedicated parliamentary human rights committees.

Allowing parliaments to contribute to the UPR requires the Council to take full account of that contribution and, where possible, seek to promote it in the course of its own deliberations. For instance, nothing is preventing the Council from questioning official delegations whether their parliament has seen or debated the report. In the same vein, the Council can ask official delegations if they intend to subsequently inform their parliaments of the UPR recommendations.

The IPU, with the support of the presidency of the Human Rights Council, has undertaken several activities this year to raise awareness among Council members and the human rights community at large to illustrate in concrete terms how parliaments have directly contributed to the impact of its work at the national level, and thus bring home the message that the Council has much to gain by enhancing parliamentary involvement in its work. The IPU intends to take those initiatives to the next level in 2013 and to advocate for the organization of a panel discussion of the Council, as part of its official programme, on the contribution of parliaments to the UPR and, more largely, to the promotion of human rights, so as to strengthen synergies between the Council and parliaments.

Let me conclude by referring to resolution 66/261, which the Assembly adopted in May, on interaction

between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU and in which the Assembly encourages the IPU to provide a parliamentary contribution to the Human Rights Council.

I hope that my intervention has shown the Assembly that the IPU is as determined, as ever, to play its role in ensuring greater parliamentary involvement in the Human Rights Council and, more specifically, in the UPR, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 64.

A representative has requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before giving the floor to that representative, may I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Ms. Alkhalifa (Bahrain): We take the floor in exercise of the right of reply to the statement given by the representative of the Principality of Liechtenstein. The Kingdom of Bahrain would like to note that any observer of the transparent interaction and active engagement of the Kingdom with the Human Rights Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the various mandate holders should be reassured of Bahrain's commitment to the promotion and the protection of human rights.

Our participation as the first country to undergo the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in both its first and second cycles, in connection with which we fully accepted 90 per cent of the recommendations presented in September, is a fact that should be welcomed and lauded by our peers. Any doubt cast on the commitments of the Kingdom of Bahrain reflect blatant disregard of the continuous efforts made by the Kingdom to fulfil its international obligations.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue on its path of reform, a fact that is reflected in the various reports of our international partners. Those reports, such as that of the working group of the UPR, are all public documents. We call on the representative of Liechtenstein to familiarize himself with their findings, to ease any concern.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 64.

Agenda item 75

Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/67/L.4)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Before we proceed, I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 75 and its sub-items (a) and (b) is scheduled to the place on Tuesday, 11 December. I should also like to remind members that the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea will take place on Monday, 10 December.

We shall now consider draft resolution A/67/L.4, entitled "Plenary meetings of the General Assembly on 10 and 11 December 2012 devoted to the consideration of the item entitled 'Oceans and the law of the sea' and to the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I wish to announce that since the issuance of document A/67/L.4, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: the Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Madagascar, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Suriname, Tonga and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.4?

Draft resolution A/67/L.4 was adopted (resolution 67/5).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina to make a statement following the adoption of resolution 67/5.

Ms. Millicay (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina would like to acknowledge the many delegations that have worked in a very cooperative and active way to promote the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the United

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which will be a joint effort on the part of many Member States, with the usual support of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the Office of Legal Affairs. We would therefore like to thank all Member States for their support for the adoption of resolution 67/5.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 75.

Agenda item 110 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of thirty members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The 30 outgoing Member States of the Commission on International Trade Law are as follows: Armenia, Bahrain, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Japan, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Those Member States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, as of 8 July 2013, the following States will continue to be represented on the Commission: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Therefore, those 30 States are not eligible for election.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of 30 members to replace those members whose term of office will expire on 7 July 2013. In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. I should like to recall, however, paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): With regard to candidatures, I should like to inform members of the following.

For the seven seats from among the African States, there are seven endorsed candidates: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

For the seven seats from among the Asia-Pacific States, there are seven endorsed candidates: China, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

For the four seats from among the Eastern European States, the group has endorsed Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Russian Federation.

For the five seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there are five endorsed candidates: Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Panama.

For the seven seats from among the Western European and other States, there are six endorsed candidates: Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since the number of candidates of the five regional groups is equal to or less than the number of seats to be filled by each group, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to declare those candidates elected for a six-year term beginning on 8 July 2013?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I congratulate the following States that the General Assembly has declared elected members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law for a six-year term beginning on 8 July 2013: Armenia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Liberia,

Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zambia.

With regard to the one remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will hold elections upon notification by interested Member States from that region.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 110.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.